TRANSCRIPT— SAMUEL ABDUL-ALLAH

Interviewee: Samuel Abdul-Allah

Interviewer: Pat Fitzpatrick

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Pat Fitzpatrick: Today I am in the Pack Memorial Library with Mr. Samuel Abdul-Allah. And I first was drawn to him with his grandfather's history, but I want to get Mr. Abdul-Allah's history, as well, because he comes from Asheville and has lived here all his life. So he will have a very interesting history. Everything he tells me is all going to be stuff I don't know. So we'll just go from there. Why don't you start wherever you'd like to start with your background.

Samuel Abdul-Allah: Okay. I'll start. I was born here in Asheville, June 17th, 1948, in Petersburg. Petersburg is an area that is right off of Sweeten Creek Road and you come up Old West Chapel Road and that area that's up at the top of the hill was considered Petersburg. And as you go on up to the right, you run into a section that is called Rock Hill. And Rock Hill Road that comes through there, comes back and ties in to Sweeten Creek Road. So my mother's father had a house on Rock Hill Road and we lived in that house where my mother was taking care of her father and then my father lived on Rock Hill Road and there was a house that was there that we lived in that was his grandfather.

And those were the two places that I lived in while I was there because both mother and father were taking care of their parents. So I lived in both areas, but the majority of my younger life, from the time that I say I was, you know, from zero to the eighth grade was spent with my mother at her address and then after my grandparents died, we moved into the larger house, which is up the street to where my daddy's father and mother were there.

My mother and daddy had a store that was on their property, like a little community store that children would come in and buy different little things and parents would buy different little things. So we had, you know, a little convenience store for the community.

And my mother's people, they were from Black Mountain, North Carolina. They lived in an area that was real close to the Carver Elementary School, all-Black school for elementary students in Black Mountain. And there was a church that was right across the street from the Carver School. My mother's daddy and them, at that time, lived, went to church there. And that cemetery, he had helped put people that were buried out there in that cemetery. My grandfather's wife on my mother's side, she's buried in that cemetery. But my grandfather, he died later, after he had moved to Asheville, and he's buried in the Rock Hill Cemetery. That's the church that he went to when there was a church up on Rock Hill Road. And it burned down in 1927, so they ended up building a Rock Hill Church over in the Shiloh community, kind of half way so the people that lived in Shiloh didn't have a real long distance to come to Rock Hill Church.

So Rock Hill had a church that was there, then Shiloh had a church that was there off the Shiloh Road. So I was, you know, lived in those two houses and the house that we lived in to where my grandfather was living, they were--he built two houses out of the logs that

he cut down when he landscaped and built the golf course in Biltmore Forest. And there is one house that's right up the street from where the small house that I lived in, it is still there, built with the logs in 1924 that my grandfather used.

PF: So what would the address of that be? The one that still exists.

SA-A: I don't know. It has changed since the time that I was there. The addresses on Rock Hill Road. So it would be somewhere around the 200 area because this big house that we lived on, the two-story log house, back during that time was 212 and the house that I lived in down the street was a 226. But now since, you know, different houses have been put in those areas, you know, they had to make room for the numbers in the area of the houses that were there.

PF: That's interesting. Gosh. Makes it historic.

SA-A: Yeah, so they have run pictures of that house in the--there's a Biltmore Forest Country Club newsletter that goes out to all the people that belong to the country--you know, the Biltmore Forest Country Club, with a picture of that small house that is still there, to let them see the history of my grandfather, what he did while he was working there and how he was able to use some of the logs that he cut down. See, the golf course was built by all Black men, back during that time. And my grandfather being the number one landscaper at the Biltmore Estate and all Black men working out there, more or less, you know, just to do that kind of work, my grandfather was given the blueprints from the Country Club to build that golf course.

And people wonder, you know, how was he able to--how was a Black man able to have the knowledge to read blueprints to build that golf course. Well, he trained up under Chauncey Beadle and he was the architect that took over Olmsted's place in 1890. So he was, you know, the number one--. I have a 1910 census showing my grandfather on the census of Mr. Chauncey Beadle that has Chauncey Beadle, his wife Margarita, my grandfather, and then a young teenager, I think that was his niece, and then a young Caucasian lady and she was like a--they were all listed as servants over there. When someone, you know, works for you, they were listed as servants. So, you know, they, more or less, you know, lived over there. So my grandfather training at the Biltmore Estate--

PF: From a young age?

SA-A: Yeah. And for Mr. Chauncey Beadle, they were pretty close to the same age themselves. And my grandfather more or less, you know, was able to train up under Chauncey Beadle, then his number one landscaper. That's why in 1920 he had the knowledge, you know, by training up under Mr. Beadle.

PF: And knew his vision.

SA-A: Yeah, to do what he needed done. And he had the working ability to have, to get the most out of the Black men that were used at the Biltmore Estate when it was first broken in. They used a lot of help from the Asheville area and especially in the Shiloh community, to work on the Biltmore Estate because the men from Shiloh could walk to work over there. And then more or less, you know, my grandfather knowing, you know,

the people over there in that area. See, his father, I have an 1861 map showing the people--.

Well, see, Asheville is different than other areas to where slaves were. Black people mainly were brought up here to Asheville to work in domestic type occupations, because Asheville had [?] for being a tourist destination. That was the reason that George Vanderbilt and his mother came down here in the 1880s, because Asheville had an atmosphere of having clean air and having clean water. So while George came down here with his mother, he used to get on the horses and he would ride around in the community, looking at different things, and when he went to the community that was owned by the Stevens family--the Stevens family was a Caucasian family that owned 1300 acres of property all the way from the bottom of Busbee Mountain, all the way over on the Biltmore Estate, and they owned the property that was in Petersburg and that was in Shiloh, all that area. They owned all that property and they had a house that was right off of Hendersonville Road where the building Six Associates--I don't know if they're still there, but they used to be there, going on the right-hand side going toward the south.

So they had quite a few slaves, you know, working for them and the majority of the slaves that they had working for them, you know, their ancestors lived in the Shiloh community and the Petersburg community. So the people more or less, you know, that was working over there in that area, my grandfather knew them, so they all worked together so they were like a big old family. So, you know, they were hired to do the work at the Biltmore Estate first.

But when a big flood came down there in Biltmore in 1916 and it did over a million dollars' worth of damage and the Vanderbilts--well, George died in 1914, and that happened in 1916, and when a lot of their prize nurseries and gardens and stuff like that were destroyed because of the rich soil that was down in that area, they needed some extra money. So they had 1500 acres of property wasn't nothing on it but trees. They couldn't make any money off of there because they couldn't have gardens there and they couldn't have cattle and stuff that was over there because there wasn't anything to graze on but trees. So they decided to make, to divide it up into acreage lots and sell it to the well-to-do people here in Asheville, as far as having a different community for the professional people than the working people. So with the knowledge of Mr. Chauncey Beadle, since he was still there during that time, they came together and formed a group of people and they sold the lots to different people. I think the houses had to be worth at least $15,000 and the acreage, I think, couldn't be any smaller than five acres of property and they couldn't subdivide that and sell it, you know, for a period of time.

PF: And then that became Biltmore Forest.

SA-A: Yeah, and so what they decided to do was to build a golf course there to attract the people to where the people have something to do and then they started building the homes around the golf course. So my grandfather that had the working knowledge of landscaping at the Biltmore Estate, up under Chauncey Beadle, Mr. Beadle asked my grandfather to take his men and go out there and build a golf course. And he carried those blueprints that were rolled up in his back pocket, you know, while they were building the golf course. So that way it allowed the Vanderbilts to develop a community there and it

would be done according to the way that the architect, Mr. Chauncey Beadle, wanted it done because my grandfather had been working for him for years.

So he left the Biltmore Estate side and went to the Biltmore Forest side and built that golf course in two years, from 1920 to 1922. And all the pictures that I have seen, that I have, just shows all Black men out there over horses and mules and buggies and drag pans and axes and shovels and stuff like that, and digging that golf course. Out of all those trees, the way it looks now. I moved back to the area in Petersburg, Rock Hill. Well, I grew up there but when I was living in Turtle Creek, when I'd be leaving Asheville, I would always ride through Biltmore Forest on Vanderbilt Road and I would come through there and I would just touch the soil and the spirit of my ancestors that had spent so many years out there, even after the golf course was built.

My mother and the majority of the Black ladies, my mother was born in 1912, so the majority of the--and the people that were there during the 20s and 30s, they were young African Americans that were there taking care of the grounds. The grass and stuff like that would grow crab grass, so the women would have these little knives and they would be cutting out the crab grass. And at some point in time, the women were making more than the men. The women were making like 50 cents an hour and the men sometime were making 25 cents an hour during that time because it was very important to keep those grounds, you know, in good shape so the people would want--so the golfers would want to play golf there. See, that was during the time that a lot of notable golfers, you know, came through Asheville and they more or less would go through, you know, to the country club because that's where the rich people in Asheville lived. So they would go there and play and stuff.

So my grandfather more or less, you know, after he built the golf course he was the first superintendent there, from 1922 to 1926. And then after that he landscaped around the first homes that were built out there around the golf course, so he had a very profitable life. And the houses that he built with the--especially the two-story house that he built, you know, with the trees that he cut down, he had more or less, he landscaped around his home the same way that he landscaped around the homes in Biltmore Forest. I could visualize, there was a house that was sitting on the Rock Hill Road, so there was a circular driveway that came off Rock Hill Road, that came in front of the two-story house and came back down into Rock Hill Road. And he had rocks that was on each side of the border of the road that went through there and he had white gravel that was there on the road itself. They went around. And then he had a rose garden that was in front between the Rock Hill Road and the way that the circular driveway came around, he had arches across there and he had roses and all kind of different things. And on the side of this house he had big rhododendrons and stuff like that. And when he built the house, there was a well. People would have to go outside the house to get water. My grandfather had a well dug and then built around the well so the well was on the back porch, so his wife didn't have to go outside in the weather, during the wintertime, and to get water. And he had a pump. He didn't have a thing that you would wind up. He had a pump there so, you know, she would go out there and pump the water and stuff. And then she had apple orchards around the house and there were gardens and stuff like that. So he had all the conveniences, you know, that was needed for his family and stuff.

PF: Now, when you came along, was he still living?

SA-A: Yes. He died in 1957. So I was nine years old. And I even have some pictures with me sitting in front of the two-story log cabin house, you know, that he had built up where he lived at. And there were people that used to talk about how good his water was because it was deep, so it was colder and stuff like that. And the way that he would ride around on horses and stuff like that, you know. They would say he was rich Negro but they called it with another name back then at that time. And in 1916, I have an old deed when he bought 13 acres of property off of Rock Hill Road, in 1916 for $1500. And to have $1500 during that time, and they were just paying people at the Biltmore Estate 50 cent an hour and 25 cent an hour, and for him to have that kind of money made during that time, it puzzles my mind to, you know.

PF: He was a saver, I guess.

SA-A: Yeah, he had a way, but 1915 was the time that, like I said, he was still working at the Biltmore Estate and working for Chauncey Beadle. So some kind of way they involved him into some money-making ventures, for him to have that kind of money during that time, you know. And it has "Sam Barnes, Colored". You know, when an African American person would buy some property, they would put on there, you know, his race, on the deed. Sam is short for Samuel. A lot of people call me Sam and stuff like that. My mother would always call me Sammy. My wife call me Sammy. And sometimes that's short for a longer name.

So anyway, you know, so I--like I said, over there in Rock Hill and Petersburg, in on that map, it has in 1861 in Rock Hill there were 35 colored cabins. In Petersburg there were 50 colored cabins and a church. So those people, African American people, lived in those

communities and they were just like public housing now. They did not stay on plantations because we were not brought up here for that type of, you know, stuff to be done. We were brought up here just to do menial work, domestic work around the homes. So that's where we stayed, in those areas. And the people, my guess, the people that owned those like paid the Stevens family money for us to live, I guess like rent or something like that, for us to live in those homes that was on their property, that had had slaves, more or less. Because I have a thing at the house, and I have it at the theater, too, where it shows in 1861 Mr. Stevens died. So what they did, they had children that went to the Civil War and they all came back alive. I think about seven boys. None of them died.

PF: Stevens boys?

SA-A: Steven boys. There's probably some issue about them here.

PF: Yeah, Jack Stevens, I think is living now. A descendant of them.

SA-A: Okay. So anyway, more or less, you know, they--Mr. Stevens died, the father died, so they ended up dividing the property, so that's why they had put some worth on the slaves. They would have the slave's first name, their age and how much they were worth, yeah, on there. So those people, more or less, you know, they lived all around over there in the area off of Hendersonville Road, which would be in the area behind their father and stuff like that because that was where George Vanderbilt bought their property, you know, from the Stevens, some of the Stevens family over there.

So anyway, there were 35 colored cabins and those people in 1874 there was a Shiloh AME Zion Church that was built over there for the slaves, you know, after they were

freed in 1865, you know, a church was built there for them over there. So you would have, my grandfather--my great-grandfather, he lived over there in Petersburg, but he was listed as one of the members of the church in the Shiloh community that was over there on the Biltmore Estate. A friend of mine just told me that he died, I didn't know when he had died, he died in 1905. So I come to find out maybe to where he was buried. I don't know if he was buried in the cemetery that was over there in Petersburg or if he was buried in the all-Black cemetery that's right over here in South Asheville, in the Kenilworth area. I know there was a Abraham Patton over there.

PF: That was his name?

SA-A: My great-grandfather was Abraham Patton, or Abe, A-b-e Patton, whichever way he went by. Patton, P-a-t-t-o-n. See, now he has a situation to where--Abe Patton was from Marion, North Carolina. That's where my grandfather was born, Sam Barnes. Sam Barnes' mother was white and his daddy was mulatto African American. They couldn't get married so the children took the names of their mother, the last name of their mother. And until I started doing some research, you know, and I came across his death certificate, that his name was Abraham Patton, and my grandfather was named, you know, Sam Barnes. And for a long time I could never understand why that was until some people started digging around in Ancestry.com and they came across the information.

PF: That was unusual. It was usually kind of the other way.

SA-A: Because, you know, they couldn't get married so they took on the name of their, last name of their mother. And my grandfather, you know, great-grandfather was named

Patton. Anyway, and Abraham Patton, I have 1880 or 1890 that showed him on the census but his name is show, more or less, you know, on the big map of the some of the people that were living over on the, you know, in the Petersburg community.

PF: What year did he die?

SA-A: 1905.

PF: 1905.

SA-A: Yes.

[Break.]

SA-A: So like I say, they say that there was a cemetery during that time, you know, and around 1861 it was down around the Petersburg community, but I don't know when the cemetery of Sunset--if it was in the same area or not, you know, cemetery down there called Sunset Cemetery.

PF: I don't know that one.

SA-A: It's right off of, as you come off Sweeten Creek Road, it's adjacent to Sweeten Creek Road and West Chapel Road. But I grew up in that area so I didn't see what you would call old old rocks and stuff like that, like it is in the slave cemetery that was off Kenilworth Road. I didn't see that type of slave, I mean, old markers or anything like that in that area. But anyway, so those communities--see, Shiloh did not come until Vanderbilt gave the Shiloh community Shiloh church a thousand dollars for their acre of property and the old Shiloh church. And then when he did, he either sold or gave them an

old Presbyterian church and they rebuilt that one in the area to where the Shiloh church is now. But that first church burned down in 1927.

PF: So there was a previous Shiloh community.

SA-A: Yeah, over on the Biltmore Estate.

PF: Right. Okay.

SA-A: That was moved to the cemetery--that was moved to the area on the other side of Hendersonville Road. When Vanderbilt bought all the property, everybody had to move. So, like I say, you know, since my grandfather was a member of that church, I don't know exactly where he is buried but his wife--no, that was on my mother's side, that she's buried in the cemetery across from the Carver School.

So anyway, you know, there was two communities that were over there. See, Black people were living over there in the area called Shiloh now, but Shiloh, they called that the new Shiloh. And the new Shiloh, see, the Stevens family owned all that property so it didn't have names. But that area was called Shiloh when the church was moved over there. But Black people were living in that are before the church moved there. So you have some Black people, more or less, that have a connection with that area before the church moved there and got the name of Shiloh community.

PF: Did they have a name for the community?

SA-A: No, because it was owned by these one people. It wasn't a community, it was just owned by the people that owned the property, so the people just moved over there and they had houses built, but it wasn't called, you know, any particular name. So the Shiloh

name just came about later as the school was being built in 1927 and then the church was put over there in 1889, the new Shiloh church. So the Shiloh--that area was called Shiloh after the church was built there.

PF: Because that was symbolic, I guess, for bringing Shiloh community over there.

SA-A: Yeah. Yes. But Black people were already living there, but there just wasn't a name to that area. So that name didn't come about until the church moved there. Yeah, just like Biltmore didn't have the name till Biltmore came there, Vanderbilt. But it was--the name was called Best.

PF: Oh, I have heard that.

SA-A: And he was a very influential man with the railroad. That's why it was called Best, because people with money buy different things and that's what comes to being under their name. Yeah. So, like I say, I grew up in the Rock Hill or Petersburg community, you know, just by--both houses were in the area called Petersburg. Because Rock Hill comes about when you go up the hill and then you go straight like this to a certain part and then you go that way. So that area is called Rock Hill up above. It's an area that it was called The Bluff. There were pine trees that was over there in this area and when we were children we could go there--there were holes that were dug around in there. And the information was that that area was used for distilling liquor. And the pine trees would keep the smoke down and you couldn't tell, more or less, there were stills there. That's why the holes were in the ground. And we would go over there like in the wintertime, when there was snow we would take our sleds and we would go up there and ride around. And also there were so many pine needles there that we could go in the summertime and

still ride on the pine needles down. So over a period of years those pine needles just have dropped there. Yeah. Stuff like that. So that area, more or less, that area down there where both the houses was, you know, was called Petersburg.

But my grandfather, since he came up here and his daddy was already living up there in this area, you know, that he had property and it could have been that he, really the way he got his money, he might have sold some property that his daddy might have owned, because his--on the census of 1900, either 1980, it has him staying next door to his daddy. So Sam Barnes was staying next door to Abraham Patton and Abraham Patton dies in 1905. And I don't know if he might have sold some property or something like that and he ended up having some money buy some more property that he built a house on in--that he bought the property in 1916. And he ended up building a house in 1924. So don't know, you know.

PF: Now, when the Black people bought their property that their homes were on, did they buy it from Stevens then?

SA-A: If Stevens hadn't sold it.

PF: If it hadn't changed hands.

SA-A: On some of the--I think I even got something to where the Stevens--where the Stevens family still sold property all around over in that area that was close to the--trying to think-- My great-grandfather ended up selling some property to Stevens or the Vanderbilt. But Stevens still was buying and selling property and stuff like that. And it might have been to the children. Because when the father died in 1861, so it probably was

to the children and stuff, you know, that the names, that come about. So anyway, that's where I grew up and stuff.

But then during the time, to bring it on up, I went to Shiloh school, Shiloh Elementary School, from 1954 to 1962, eight years of elementary school. And then Stevens Lee was the only Black school for African Americans in Buncombe. So we ended up going to school there at Stevens Lee. I went there for three years, till my eleventh grade, and during that time they were building--they had already planned what they were going to do as far as integration, so they integrated the Buncombe County schools in 1965, but they also built a high school in Asheville on South French Broad which was called South French Broad High School that is now Asheville Middle School. They were building on that one, so during the fall of 1965, that's when we transferred to South French Broad High School. So I ended up going to graduate from there in 1966, from South French Broad. So my class ring has South French Broad but my diploma has Stevens Lee on it. So I guess it was so fast they didn't have a chance to reprint the new high school, you know.

PF: You were the last ones.

SA-A: Even though we got the last high school, Stevens Lee High School diploma, but we still, you know, graduated from South French Broad in '66. So in 1966, that was during the time of the Vietnam war. So I went to A-B Tech. So I took up welding, so I went there from '66 to '67. And during the time that I had, you know, finished up over there I went to Columbus, Ohio, and stayed for a while, until Uncle Sam said, "Well, you're going to get drafted". So I had to come back to Asheville and go to Charlotte and

take some tests and stuff like that and see where I scored high enough to what branch of service that I could get into.

The Army, you'd have to score as high as you did to get into the Air Force. So since I had gone to A-B Tech and I had taken up a course, you know, engineering and blueprint reading and mechanical, stuff like that, I had come into some knowledge of when I took the test that I scored high enough to get into aircraft maintenance. So when I went in to 15 months to aircraft maintenance school in the Air Force, then they needed--they used the helicopters a lot during the Vietnam war to fly around when they were fighting the war. So I did 15 months of schooling at aircraft maintenance in Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas. I went there and then while I was there they had a flight line with helicopters on there, so they needed somebody there, so I stayed there three-and-a-half years working on the flight line at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls for three-and-a-half years. And then my last six months I went to an air force base in Ft. Walton Beach called Eglin Air Force Base.

PF: I used to live right there.

SA-A: Oh, yeah?

PF: Pensacola.

SA-A: Okay. So I went down there for my last six months. So when I got back out of the service, I came back home and since I had taken up welding, and there were a lot of employment here for those type of trades back during that time, there was a muffler company called Walcos. They were out there on Hendersonville Road; and Geralco, they

were making cans Gerber; and Engineering Associates, they were making mechanical type stuff. And then Fishburne's, they were going out toward the airport out there that way, so they were making big equipment and stuff like that. So I welded at all those different plants, you know, since I had already gone to school taking welding.

And one day I went into this--we were working at Engineering Associates and some carpenters came and did some remodeling work inside and I looked at it and saw the way that--I liked what I saw. So I told this friend of mine, I said, "Well, I'm going to, I've got my GI Bill, I'm going to go to school and take up carpentry. I'd like to learn how to do that". So I went back to A-B Tech in '73, graduated in '74. And then when I got out, when I graduated, my first job was working when they were rebuilding St. Joseph Hospital. I was working there and got a job there. Then later on I got into an apprenticeship program with a company called Buncombe Construction. They've gone out of business. They used to be down there on Meadow Road. So I got on the apprenticeship program there and did my time.

And there was a lady that was the coordinator for apprenticeship programs in North Carolina called Carolinas Construction Training Council. And she was, you know, overseeing apprenticeship plus a lot of highway work they was doing. They had, you know, opening up a mountain and different things like that. So, anyway, she took a job with the Department of Transportation and I ended up putting in for her job so I was training coordinator for this area for four years. So I did that from 1978 to 1982. But during 1978, I joined the Air Force Reserve--I joined the Army Reserve. I needed a little extra money and since I had been in the service, stuff like that. And I was working--I was in the Air Force during my whole four years but I ended up going to the Army for about a

year and a half. So I did a year and a half in a combat engineering squad over here on Louisiana Avenue. Then I found out I could get back into the Air Force, in the reserve program, so what I ended up doing was going down to Charleston, South Carolina. They had a shuttle that was picking people up down in Greenville, and they would drop them off down in Charleston. They'd pick them up on Sunday and drop them back there and then I would drive back. But it got to the point to where it was kind of hard sometimes, that the planes would be late and stuff like that. So when I would get down to Charleston, that it was just kind of hard to find housing and stuff like that. So I ended up, started driving down there. So I guess for about out of four years of my six years, I drove to Charleston, South Carolina, every month for reserve. And then I found out that I could get into another squadron in Fayetteville. They have an Air Force base in Fayetteville called Pope Air Force Base. It connects right to Fort Bragg. A new squadron just opened up down there, so I was able to get into that squadron, get a higher rank. So I drove to Charleston, South Carolina--I mean, I drove to Fayetteville, North Carolina, every month.

PF: It's even further, isn't it?

SA-A: It's pretty close to the same, four-and-a-half hours. Well, I did that every month for ten years, till I could get my 20 years in. And then the squadron closed down in--what year was that?--1996, I think it was, it closed down, '95 or '96. So I did my ten years down there so it allowed me to get my 20 years in, all together, and four years active and my 16 years reserve, to get into my retirement. So that helped me out because when I was doing construction work, you know, I always worked for myself. I had Sam's Construction Service that I did for myself from 1983 to about 1988. And right down the street, down there to where the triangle park is, at one time there was an old filling station

that was there. And I had done some work for the YMI Cultural Center and I set up a program to where I was--myself and the City of Asheville and I think the government, we came together and we had a training program to help out on people that needed, you know, to learn some different skills. I had ten people training on thousand hour programs to where they could learn different skills in the construction trade. So I did that and while I was on that my company was hired to do the manual work and stuff on the triangle park. So I have some old pictures showing how that used to be and how it looked when we finished and how it looks now. The trees have grown and everything like that. But myself and A&B Construction, I don't know if they stayed here in Asheville, we came together and we did that park and to look at it now and to see how it turns out to be from the way it was, to where the sidewalks had grass and weeds and stuff growing on it, and it was just dilapidated. And just to see the new murals on the walls and how it looks now.

PF: Now, I may not know--are you talking Pritchard Park?

SA-A: No, right down here behind the YMI Cultural Center.

PF: Down below.

SA-A: On the right-hand side.

PF: Behind. What I would call behind, maybe?

SA-A: No, straight down on the--Market Street that comes down?

PF: Right.

SA-A: You keep going down Market Street. Market Street winds back into Hendersonville Road down there--yeah, that's called Biltmore Avenue now.

PF: Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

SA-A: Yeah, because Biltmore Avenue, it changes from Hendersonville Road to Biltmore and then changes from Biltmore Avenue coming back to Asheville.

PF: Yeah, and going the other way it turns into Merrimon and Weaverville. Every community has a different name for it.

SA-A: So anyway, more or less, just right where the Orange Peel is, that street that comes up around up there down, coming down by the police department. Well, one of these days when you're not busy, just ride over there and look.

PF: I go down that quite a bit. I do know where you mean now. Yeah. When first you said triangle and Pritchard Park is a triangle.

SA-A: Where the mural's down there, they're on the triangle park.

PF: Okay.

SA-A: Okay. But to see how it turned out, you know, from the time that I was doing that in 1988 and 1989, we did all the sidewalk coming from the Orange Peel on both sides of Biltmore Avenue, coming all the way up to the Vance Monument. We did that. So I had, you know, trainees on that project, you know, and I can look at it now, just to see how it turned out to be. And I look at that as a--as something memorial that I done, the way I look at what my grandfather did when I go through Biltmore Forest.

PF: Something that will last and makes its mark.

SA-A: Yeah. That looks good and ties in, and that's going to take on a different scene since they're building those new buildings around there. So five years from now it's going to look different than it does now.

PF: Yeah. And it's a good thing you did it when you did it, too, the way things go down there.

SA-A: Yeah. So I can see it. So I did that, I stayed in my business till 1988, and then I started going back helping a friend of mine do different projects until my knees went out on me. I'm 69 now so it was time to put it in cruise control. And enjoy your life a little bit.

PF: Well, you earned it.

SA-A: I have started, another thing that I have started, I was working on a project one day at the radio WBMU or WRES or whatever it's called now, where John Hayes is. They were talking about the disadvantages in Asheville as far as African American men, to how far that we're behind on different things. And I told a friend of mine, I said, "Well, what we need to do", I said, "education is the key". And I said, "If I had the money, and I know how A-B Tech has helped me out", I said, "I would provide scholarships at A-B Tech for minorities". So God put it on my heart and my mind said, "Well, you may not have the money, but I have blessed you with friends. Why not develop a program to where you can get money from your friends and set up a scholarship?" So I came up with this idea of having my goal, and knew we would get there, to have 100 men and women

to donate $100 a year for scholarships. And we could do that at A-B Tech for $1,000 scholarships. At ten people, would be 100 people. Ten people times a thousand dollars would be 100 people.

PF: Yeah. A thousand. Because you said a hundred.

SA-A: Yeah. A hundred dollars a person time ten would be a thousand dollars. So that would be ten people with $1,000 scholarships at A-B Tech. And they could get into something that would help them in life. So anyway, I came up with the idea, so I started in about 2012. So, so far I have given out, myself and Johnny Walker--I mean Johnny Grant, John and Mary Grant, we all come together and we have given out, over 15 scholarships that we've given out. We had three for last year. They all didn't graduate from last year, but anyway, it started off with two, two, two; three, three, three; three, six, nine. And then two, four, six, nine and five is 15. So we've given out 15 scholarships at $1,000 apiece. And it's called 100 Mean and Women Minority Scholarships.

PF: Do you have your whole hundred people yet?

SA-A: Oh, no. No. No, that's just the goal to work on. You know, that's the name I gave it.

PF: It's a goal though. You have a goal, that's good.

SA-A: Yeah. So anyway, we more or less, you know, have given out 15. So this year we have three young ladies at A-B Tech, that's taking advantage of it. So I think we're working on the--most of the time they start off with two, two, two people. And then we've gone three, three, three people, to where, you know, it has a grown a little bit to

where we--they used to tell me, more or less, who would give out the scholarships. But when we send out thank-you letters, I was giving them--I do a lot of reading--I was giving them a Black history book every year, just showing my appreciation. Instead of giving them a thank-you letter, I'd give them a Black history book. So I was able, more or less, to do that every year. But they've changed it to where I don't know who's giving the money now. They won't tell me now. But we have some secret admirer that gave me $1,000 this year, so that really helped out. Because I'm always getting people that drop. Because the economy and stuff like that. So I haven't been able to keep it going. Well, like I say, we started off with two people, so now we have three people. So if we can kind of keep the three going. I got a good solid group that I know that I can get $2,000 a year, but I still want to grow it, and I grow it pretty good. But our scholarships is real, is going pretty good.

PF: And what's the name of your fund?

SA-A: 100 Men and Women Minority Scholarship. And they are tax deductible. So, you know, every little bit helps. It helps me, more or less, you know, to have a career in life. I did it for 35 years, construction work. So I want to kind of give something back to the community.

PF: That's a wonderful thing and it will go on like your other thing, that triangle.

SA-A: Yeah, to help out with that and stuff like that. So I have that and God has blessed me with my granddaughters. She's a UNCG, she graduated from Roberson, so she's at UNCG. So by me helping out with the scholarship, you know, we were able to go to full

scholarship with her, where, you know, it wasn't nobody give anything. We just, the family just came together, you know, sending her and stuff like that.

PF: And how many children did you have?

SA-A: I had three. I have a son, he's 41; a daughter is 38; and a son that's 34. And my daughter, she's in her 20th year in the Air Force, so she's up there at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. And I have some pictures, quite a few pictures with her taken a picture with President Obama, because he always goes and plays golf there, at the golf course in Maryland because it's just right across the street almost, you know. She's up there and stuff. I've been up there quite a few times, seeing the different things. I've seen the big monument of Martin Luther King up there. So I've been to that. Went to Baltimore and seen some stuff there. A big Black history museum in Baltimore, you know, wax museum and stuff like that? And there was one young man, he went to Stevens Lee and he played professional--I think he went to a Baltimore College, somewhere in Baltimore. Anyway, he ended up playing for the Baltimore Colts, I think it is. And anyway, he ended up going in Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise and he had one of the biggest franchises up in that area. So they have a big molded picture of him in that museum. So it was very satisfying to see somebody from your hometown, you know, up there.

PF: And you didn't know about that before you saw it?

SA-A: No. Didn't know about that. And to see that, you know, inside the museum.

PF: And how many grandchildren?

SA-A: I have seven.

PF: Oh, that's what I have. Seven.

SA-A: Like I say, between my grandfather's work and my scholarship work, and just built a new house, I'm just breaking that in. So, you know, trying to get some stuff around that house, the yard and stuff like that, looking like it's been there for a while. So that kind of keeps me busy.

PF: Now, do you enjoy landscape work, or outdoor?

SA-A: Yeah, before my knees went back on me, you know, I did. I bought a house down here on Choctaw Street and I did a lot of changing the yard and stuff around and when somebody else bought it, they changed it around. So I kind of stay busy and that and like I say, you know, I work at the theater, at the Carolina Theater, on Tuesday. We have $5 Tuesdays, everybody can come in for $5, seeing the movie. And then it's pretty busy on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. So I work the four busiest days.

One time, there's a movie that came out once. I have an uncle that is buried in the cemetery in Black Mountain, right behind the church to where my grandfather from the Black Mountain side went. He's buried there. He was a, what you call a Tuskegee airman.

PF: Oh, yeah.

SA-A: And he was in that squadron. He was a first sergeant. First sergeant is the person in charge of the enlisted personnel. And, anyway, he's buried there. And the movie came out about Redtails, about five, six years ago. And I had just given a talk out at T. C. Roberson to the ROTC out there, since I was in the Air Force and since my uncle was a Tuskegee airman. And a lot of people saw me and they tell me they was coming to see

the movie because of what they had heard me say about the Tuskegee airmen. Because of out of almost a thousand that were trained in Tuskegee, Alabama, there were four from Asheville.

PF: Oh, wow.

SA-A: Yeah, four from Asheville. And one of the men, his picture is on the wall at the Asheville Airport out there. He's the only African American picture that you see out there, is a pilot, in the airport out there where they got all the pictures on the wall about different pilots. So anyway, I gave them a talk out there at the Air Force ROTC at Roberson. And I said people would see me around in the street and in the grocery store and they'd say, "Well, I'm coming to the movie because of what you said about Tuskegee airmen". And I went out there and I told the manager, I said, "Well, I would like some free tickets because I am going to be responsible for a lot of people coming". So he gave me some tickets. And I said, "Well, I have some history about Tuskegee airmen. Can I set up a table right here in the theater. He said, "Yeah".

So I had my table set up for about three weeks. So my last weekend I was there, he came to me, he said, "Sam, I like the way that you deal with people. If you want to work one day a week, you can come to these movies free". So I said, "Well, I'll work Saturday and Sunday", or Friday and Saturday I think I said. So a new ownership is coming on. I've been out there going on six years and I still have the same job of sitting back there in the back, taking your tickets and telling you which way to go.

I'd like to have a dollar for all the people I've met in almost six years that I have talked to by coming back there. And I have a tendency to ask people where they're from. 80

percent, well, at least 75 to 80 percent of the people are from Florida. The next percentage is people from New York. And the next percentage are the people from Ohio. Those are the three top places. And the bottom almost is from Asheville, almost. The people that were born here. Because we're like everybody else. We grew up in a place and we moved to somewhere. The same where they grew up somewhere and moved somewhere. And one night I had 29 different states and 10 different countries, of people came to the theater.

PF: So you don't get many California, like me.

SA-A: Yeah, quite a few California. Yeah. And I always ask them, "Did you drive Interstate 40 down?" And some say yeah and some say no. "The moving van came that way but I flew down here". Because my daughter was stationed in Vegas and then I drove her car down here when she was getting ready to go to Japan. So we drove her car down here and I knew that it took four days and about, I think the beginning to the end was about 2300 miles from California all the way down to Wilmington. And it's about 2,000 mile to Asheville. I did about 500 miles a day, when I was coming here.

So, you know, between those jobs and I have people that come there and say, "Sam, if you wasn't here, I wouldn't be coming to the theater. I like the way that you speak to me and treat me and stuff like that". So, you know, that's the same thing that the manager saw in me when he asked me to just work one night a week at the theater.

My mother was a den mother and she did volunteer work at the Red Bank--Red Cross and stuff like that. And she was a cake maker. And all her friends at the church, she'd always make them a cake on their--she would always make them a cake on their birthday.

So she was a supporter of the community. So, you know, that has grown into, I guess I picked up some of her habits that she has.

PF: Well, even your interest in your ancestors. It takes you out of yourself and makes you feel part of all of everything.

SA-A: And see I could go in my house and I can look at five generations. I have the names of the sixth generation, which is Abraham Patton, but I don't have pictures of him. But I have pictures of Sam Barnes, his mama was white, his daddy was Black. Sam Barnes married my grandmother, name was Sarah. Her daddy was a Cherokee Indian out of South Carolina. She was a Littlejohn. So when Indians come down from Cherokee, we start talking, I say, "Well, we're related, through blood". Littlejohn is a Cherokee Indian name.

PF: I mentioned that I learned something in all these. And that was something I've learned almost each one of the Black people--you would be the fourth, I guess, that I have interviewed in this project. Every one of them has had Indian blood, which is interesting to me. I didn't know that, that it was that prevalent. I knew it could be. I just didn't know that it was almost universal down here, it seems like. Because when you see a light-skinned person, like yourself, you assume it's all white.

SA-A: Well, see, the thing about it, my grandfather in Black Mountain, his daddy was white and his mama was African American.

PF: So you had the reverse somewhere in there, plus the Indian.

SA-A: Yeah, but he married ancestry of slave that came from the West Indies where slavery started first, going to England to raise sugar for sugar cane and rum and stuff like that. In the West Indies. That's where Blacks started going first, before they came to America. They started going there. So I got African ancestry pure married my grandfather was half Black and half white. And you look, his features are so keen people would wonder what he used to do riding on the back of the bus, because he could have passed for a white person if he had wanted to. If you'd see his picture now, you would think that he was white. His nose is keen as yours.

PF: That's English.

[Laughter.]

PF: British. Yeah. But I'm--it's interesting because you're a Black version of what I'm a white version of. I'm no pure anything. I mean I'm white but I'm like seven different things, you know.

SA-A: If a lot of people would take their ancestry, they would find the same thing.

PF: Yeah. I always say I'm a Heinz--57 Varieties.

[Laughter.]

PF: Because I am. I'm European but all the British Isles, each of them, and then some European things.

SA-A: So don't know what ancestry my grandfather from Black Mountain daddy was. Don't know that. But I have--my son's girlfriend, she's been--she's from overseas so she

can't find anything about her so she's been looking up stuff about my son. And I tell--she told me this a couple days ago when she came by the house because I didn't know when my great-grandfather had died. And she told me. I said, "Well, look up some more information". I think she said he might have been in the Spanish-American War or something. So she's going to look up some information about him now. So that's good that she can find out some stuff. Because I'm a computer illiterate. I don't know anything about any of that. And I just haven't had the desire to want to do it.

PF: Well, I find most things I want to know, even like when I looked you up, your grandfather up, I just go Google. Put it up in Google. And, my goodness, it's amazing what you find. Even an address, just everything. And you can ask it questions. I didn't know that will, I guess you always could but you put in almost a question. Keep it simple, with the words that you're interested in, and it will answer the question. It will bring up something about it.

SA-A: Now in the interview, are you going to be able to play that and it's going to type out?

PF: No, I type it out.

SA-A: You have to type it out? Ohhhh.

PF: Yeah, that's what I've always done. And I can eliminate certain whatever, too.

[Break.]

PF: How has urban renewal or the highways or anything else, the widening of Hendersonville Road, how has that changed your community? What do you remember when you were younger, growing up there, that is very different or gone?

SA-A: Okay. Since I grew up on Sweeten Creek Road, off of Sweeten Creek Road over there, in essence the businesses on Sweeten Creek Road have increased, because one time it was just a long road that was through there. It was in the country. It was not in the city limit. So you have more businesses on Sweeten Creek Road now, but it didn't destroy anything that was there. It just took over the vacant property that was there on that road.

But then after you get off the road and go back in on the property, them businesses have flourished. Like where UPS is now. You know, the parcel service. Back in that area, more or less different things, different plants and stuff like that have grown because there was property back there that went toward the Oakley area.

PF: Was that farmland?

SA-A: Just wooded area. No, it wasn't farmland. It was just wooded area. Because, you know, it was hilly, up and down, and stuff like that. But when big business come there, you know, they just buy the whole thing and just level it out to what they needed for that particular business, you know, to be there and stuff like that.

And then there was, right off of Hendersonville Road, there's an area where there were houses they call Forest Lake. But one time that was called Simpson Sawmill.

PF: Simpson?

SA-A: Simpson, S-i-m-p-s-o-n Sawmill. That was an area that these Simpson people bought that property, probably from the Stevens family, because they owned all that property, to the Busbee Mountain. And they just had a sawmill over there. They were producing lumber to build houses and stuff like that during that time. But after the end that people have died out, the husband and wife and their children, stuff like that, they had to sell the property, so some developer bought the property and decided to put Forest Lake, a housing development over there.

So, yeah, different things like that have happened over there in the area off of Rock Hill Road. But other than that, everything is the same. Between Sweeten Creek Road and Rock Hill Road and then Rock Hill Road and the mountain. Because the Vanderbilts own the mountain so you can't go but so far over there. They have allowed the right-of-way for the Blue Ridge Parkway to go through there, but that's the only thing that is on there, you know, really on the mountain.

And you might see a few houses spotted up on the top of Busbee Mountain, but everything is the same. It looks the same, you know, from the time that I used to--since I grew up right down at the bottom of the mountain, we would go hiking up there. And there were apple orchards up there. We'd go up there, take our backpack, and we would get apples. When we were young we would go squirrel hunting up there. And I would set rabbit traps and stuff up there to catch rabbits and stuff.

So in essence, that wasn't part of urban renewal because it wasn't owned by the city. It wasn't in the city limits. That was in the country.

PF: Did the highway in any way make--

SA-A: No, no, not Shiloh. Because it only went up-- Shiloh was not on Hendersonville Road.

PF: No, I understand that.

SA-A: Shiloh was--the way the right-of-way, the highway of Hendersonville Road comes, there were businesses that was connected right between the road and back so many feet. So that didn't touch the African Americans community that was over there. That was some distance away from the main Shiloh Rocky Road. I mean, Hendersonville Road, you know, that was touched and stuff like that. So, you know, that didn't do anything to that area.

It brought more businesses there, but it didn't affect the community the way that urban renewal did with the highway coming through. Well, when Interstate 40 came through between Sweeten Creek Road to Hendersonville Road, that was a section over there that was called Brooklyn. So there were a lot of houses that were taken from that. There was a community, an African American community that was connected to the Biltmore Estate side, right behind what you call the Biltmore Dairy. It was called--what was it called?--wait a minute--not Boosertown. It'll come to me in a minute. But there was an African American community that was connected to the houses that was over there, you know, when the Vanderbilt bought the property, over there in Biltmore Forest area. Now, it was destroyed by that road coming through there. Yeah, all that was taken. And then when they come through the Shiloh-Brooklyn area, the highway cut off the road that came through, that connected Shiloh and Brooklyn. That's an area that's down there by Thoms Hospital.

PF: Oh, yes. Yes, I know.

SA-A: Up in that area. There was a certain section called Brooklyn. But as you come off of London Road, white people lived on London Road and then they built in that area that is over there that's over there now that is predominantly where Black people lived. They connected to the whole community of Brooklyn, where all Black people lived that was connected to Shiloh, going back toward the south side. I mean, going to South Asheville, going that way. That was connected through that.

So I guess really that was the only thing that was, when Interstate 40 came there, it did upset and disconnected Brooklyn from Shiloh. And like making it--Brooklyn and Shiloh were just like Petersburg and Rock Hill. You had the section that was up on this end, a section down that way. And then, you know, there was a street that came down that separated the two and then that has done the same thing as the highway has done, it just separated the two. But it was already given a different name, just by the road being there; that that section was called Brooklyn, the other section was called Shiloh.

Yeah, there's an area over on the Biltmore Estate that's called Legacy--I mean, where the Shiloh AME Zion Church was located and when the people moved there when George Vanderbilt bought the property in 1889, the African Americans dug up the bodies and they never did fill the holes in. And I guess they figured, you know, when they was out there in the woods and stuff like that, didn't matter. So when the Legacy of the Land Tour goes there and tells the people about the history of the cemetery and the church, they go down there and see the cemetery but they see where the holes are still indents in the

ground, over years ground, the dirt has been blown in them and leaves and stuff like that. But you can still see where the, you know, where the people were dug up from.

And then the bodies out there were taken to the Shiloh cemetery. They didn't know who were buried there, so they just put rocks and any kind of little markers there just to show that there was a body there, but they didn't have any idea who the people were, you know, some of the names and stuff like that, back in 1889, up to that point. The slavery ended in 1865, you know. The people knew themselves where they put their bodies of their ancestors, so, you know, that's all that mattered to them. There wasn't some thing, that's something later on--earlier, maybe the rich white people, or people that owned the slaves, they could put the names down there. But, you know, slaves didn't care nothing about it.

PF: About registering.

SA-A: No, no, they didn't care about nothing like that. You know, there wasn't nothing like that that was part of their everyday activity. So, anyway, those are the people more or less, you know, that were buried there and stuff like that.

So Mr. Charles Connors, he was a member of the Rock Hill AME Zion Church over there in Shiloh. So they say that someday that church might have had some glass windows or something like that, but I don't know because if the church burned down, you can believe that a lot of stuff was destroyed.

But what had happened, see, I have a listing of how the slaves--I mean, the people from Shiloh church spent the thousand dollars that Vanderbilt gave them. And a lot of stuff

you hear is George Vanderbilt had their bodies dug up and moved to the cemetery and then how he had the church built over there. They had to pay that themselves out of the thousand dollars that George Vanderbilt give them. So there's not a thing they had a thousand dollars, you know, to do what they wanted to with it. I have a breakdown of showing how much they paid the workers to work on the church, how much they paid these workers to dig the bodies and move the bodies. It's all on this listing that was given to the Shiloh church from the historian out at the Biltmore Estate.

PF: Well, it's kind of like YMI and All Souls, that area and everything. One version you hear is that Vanderbilt did all that for them and gave it to them. But it wasn't like that, I don't believe. They ended up kind of buying it back or paying it off or something. It wasn't given as a gift.

SA-A: Well, the Vanderbilts, I heard that he loaned them some money.

PF: That's what I mean. It wasn't a gift.

SA-A: No, no. It wasn't a gift. Have you heard anything about the Blacks, at one time, went to the All Souls Church?

PF: Not the church, really, but that the housing was for the workers.

SA-A: No, I'm talking about the church itself and that was the reason that he named it All Souls, that Black could go there, then he got so much pressure from the community because the community did not want him to allow Black people.

PF: No.

SA-A: I had heard that, you know, but I don't know what degree of truth was in that. The Blacks, you know, that more or less, the stopped going there-- Because they wasn't slaves anymore. They were people that were working, you know, for him and around him and stuff like that. And that they could come down there. But after the greatest African community, you know, they wouldn't come to their church so they kind of frowned on it. So I don't know if there was any truth to that little story, stuff like that.

PF: I don't know. I mean, even today people have their own churches and so on.

SA-A: Oh, yeah. Yeah. People want to be with their own family that you grew up with.

PF: Yeah. Well, even in the military, I mean you clung kind of to the military.

[Break.]

SA-A: ...Frankfort, Germany; three times London; Honduras; Italy and Paris. The main thing you're doing, when you go to those places, you're trying to listen out for somebody can speak English. You don't care how they look if you need some direction.

PF: How did you come to changing your name from Barnes to Abdul-Allah?

SA-A: Well, after I got out of the service in 1972, a few friends of mine, we used to get together and talk about stuff, in the service and stuff around Asheville and stuff like that. And this one man, he had spent some time in prison. And he had come across the teaching of Elijah Mohammed. Elijah Mohammed was a man, an activist that talked about Black history back in the thirties, all the way up in the seventies. And he was talking about a religion that I had never heard about called Islam. And he was saying, you

know, that Africans had a history of the religion of Islamic teachers, all the way back in Africa.

So after going to Charlotte and hearing the teachings that the minister down there would talk about, the same type of teaching, back in the sixties, was what influenced Kareem Abdul Jabbar and Mohammed Ali back during that time. Now Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, he did not follow the teachings of Elijah Mohammed that was out of Chicago. He didn't go through the nation of Islam. He just went straight into the Islamic religion. But Elijah Mohammed was teaching Islam to people that had been raised in the church, or been in prison or different things like that, and then had been taught something different to not being proud of themselves, for their ancestry.

A lot of the reason that they wasn't proud of themselves was they were not taught--we were not taught the truth about ourselves. One of the things that the slavemaster would do, they would not allow Black people to even read the Bible. So because they knew that once they unlocked that part of your mind that could produce a human being instead of an animal, they didn't want to do that. You could go to church and sit in a section of the church, of their church, and then later on you could have your own church. But they would get together and talk about what they had learned about. But there wasn't ever any, you know, the teaching of reality, as far as the Islamic religion was taught.

If you look back at Roots, Kunta Kinte was from the Mandingo tribe. And his tribe were from Muslims. And that's one of the things that they--that he passed down through his generations all the way to Alex Haley, was that the Islamic religion was a part of what you practiced there. You were not animals running around like the Blacks that were

showed on television when King Kong and Amos and Andy and different things like that were shown. That you had a society. That you were not living in caves and stuff like that, like how the Europeans were living, in Europe and stuff like that. The Black people living in the jungle and before the Renaissance came, you know, by the Moors that went to England to educate them, they were not civilized as the way they are now. So that Islamic religion came to Spain and rejuvenated them.

So a lot of the stuff just was not taught, you know, to the African community. So after hearing a lot of the teachings about what I didn't know about and understanding, more or less, you know, how Black people could be on one plantation the one day, get sold to the next plantation the next day, and they would just be called any kind of name, or just be called a first name but would be called a name from their traditional area that they would have, because it wasn't known, more or less, where they were from. And they wasn't caring about where they were from and stuff like that.

So the Blacks, more or less, you know, were just what you call slaves and then they turned out to be like a Amos and Andy or Kingfisher or something like that that we would see on television. This is as far as you come until 1960s and they showed Bill Cosby playing on I Spy. You know, Mod Squad, you know, things like that. That's when, you know, Blacks started more less, you know, later on they started developing on up till some other roles and stuff like that.

So I decided, more or less, you know, that I was going to leave the Christian church and get into the Islamic religion because I was seeing that all the pictures that I would see in the Sunday School books and in the Bible were pictures of white people but when I read

it Moses married an Ethiopian woman. And I know Ethiopian were Black people, like, I mean, it was never shown. Or how the son of man had hair like lambs' wool and feet like burnt brass, and I know lambs' wool ain't long and straight, that it's kind of kinky a little bit. Or how Solomon said he was Black and comely, and Black and comely means he was handsome, beautiful, you know. He was discussing his ancestry. And Bathsheba, more or less, you know, come from the African community.

So I started seeing different reality views of my history. And then I was seeing, more or less, the long blond hair on Jesus all the time, and the little children sitting around up under him. And that wasn't reflective of what was the land that African Americans came from, or the people came from, you know, over in that area and stuff like that.

So when we started going into the, first the nation of Islam, we showed that we were going to reject our slavemaster's name, we didn't do it at first legally to where like, you know, maybe Mohammed Ali--I mean Malcolm X, you know, he had a X, so he was going--if he wanted his last name legal[?] or not. And, you know, in our own little church-going community we were saved, but in our mosque-going community we'd be known as Samuel X. And then if he was the first person there in your community, your name is Samuel X. But if you were the fifth person then you'd be known as Samuel 5X. That would mean there was five other people, four other people before you, so you're not X. So men here in Asheville, and we just developed a community in Asheville, I was known as Samuel X. But then when Elijah Mohammed died and his son took over, he was saying, well, that was good for a term but we no longer living in that age group. If you want to take on the Islamic name, you just take on a Muslim name.

So since I was the first Muslim in my community, I mean in my family, I changed--I kept my first name in memory to my grandfather, but I changed my middle name, which was Warren. That was the middle name of my father, whose name was William Warren Barnes. And then I changed my last name of my grandfather. His name was Barnes. I changed it to Abdul-Allah. And that's one of the highest names you can get, because Abdul means servant of and Allah means that's the name for God. So my name is Samuel, my middle name's Mohammed. That means praiseworthy. So my name means Samuel Praiseworthy Servant of God. And you can't get no higher name than the name of being the servant of God. You can't give it--there's nothing you can do higher in your life than try to do your works as being the servant of God, because you are going to try to do it the best way possible. Because you're trying to live up to your name, you know.

Barnes goes from my grandfather back to his mother's maiden name. So that's really not his name. That was his mother's name, last name. I didn't know all that then, but I knew that that last name belonged to somebody.

PF: Now, his son carried Barnes.

SA-A: Yeah, his son carried Barnes, yeah. His son carried Barnes. But I wanted to go back and make a connection to the best source I could make of myself. So the short--you don't see my name too much. You see Abdullah. That's short for Abdul Allah.

PF: Oh.

SA-A: Abdullah is. But I didn't want to go Abdullah. I wanted to--when I sign my name, I wanted to have the whole thing up there. I started doing highway cleanup in 2001.

There are signs that I had--I did 13 highways and 13 streets. And even though I've stopped cleaning them up, they're still some highways--I know there's still one name that's still up with my name and my grandfather's name. That's--where is that at--it's down on Sweeten Creek Road. When Rock Hill Road comes down, and it's by Jesse Ray's funeral home. You'll see a highway sign that says Adopt a Highway?

PF: Uh-huh.

SA-A: They have Sam Barnes Memorial and then Samuel Abdul-Allah on it. So I used to have that all over town and stuff like that. And I see it has some names with my grandfather's name on the ones that I had by the liquor store and it's got James Vestal Miller, the Black man that did all these churches around here, and my grandfather's name. I paid the State to identify me, you know, by putting his name on there with my grandfather, because those are two of the most notable people that Black people still around, that you can see something that they did. Until the earth comes to an end, Biltmore Forest going to always be there and my grandfather's history will always be there, because he built it.

I go out there to visit the lady every Saturday, every Thursday. Take some grapes and we talk and stuff like that. And when I be walking around, I'll be the only Black person walking around out there, other than the people that might be working in the kitchen or doing something like that. There might be a few of them still working out in the kitchen. But one time all Black people worked out there, you know, keeping everything going on the outside. But now they're Mexicans. Because, you know, Black people feel that, you know, they can get a higher-paying job than just doing that now, and stuff like that.

But when I go out there now, I've been going out there for so long now that when everybody--the managers or the people that play golf out there, they wave at me, they speak to me or when I'm down there talking to the historian, when people be coming and getting the golfing equipment, she always says, she says, "Do you know that man over there?" They say no. She was saying, "His grandfather was the first greens keeper over here and he worked with Chauncey Beadle under the direction of Donald Ross and they built this golf course here". You should see the look change on their face. I'm not just somebody sitting around. I am somebody. Because of what my grandfather did.

So I keep that and when I drive through there, when I was living in Turtle Creek and we come from Asheville, I always come down there at the bottom of Vanderbilt Road and drive through Biltmore Forest to put that ingrained in my grandchildren, to know "You are somebody. You come from somebody. Your name here in Asheville is related to the top man here in Asheville, the Vanderbilts. Your ancestors built the golf course for Vanderbilts, other Vanderbilts' sons and wife. 1914 George died. 1920 they built the golf course. Your great-great-grandfather built this with all Black men. They weren't working in the kitchen. They were building this. Your grandfather had enough knowledge to his work.

Black people couldn't even go to school with white people but he had enough knowledge to take these blueprints and look out there in the woods and build this golf course the way it is now. They've remodeled it, but he did the groundwork. Those men cut down those trees with axes, dug up those trees, the roots of it, with shovels and picks and stuff like that. And used to take a thing, what you call the drag pan, and smooth that ground out and stuff like that, to throw the grass out there and make this grass right here short and

smoother than this grass over here that they take the golf club and knock it up and then put it back down. But this right here, they just put on this, just as smooth as this. Your great-great-grandmama got on her knees and she was there with a little knife, cutting out crabgrass so these people could play out here. I says, "So you have the lowest of history by your great-great-grandmother cutting out crabgrass, by the top of history by your great-great-granddaddy building this thing. You got history".

So you know, my legacy, our legacy is going to be here. It's a part of Asheville like the Grove Park Inn. But it's a difference, you know.

PF: Now, do they acknowledge--you mentioned the things that are framed up there. Do they acknowledge that the Black people are the ones that built all that?

SA-A: They don't see it unless they can get on the internet. But I don't know if the people, if the people that come out there and are members of the club, they don't know that.

PF: That's interesting.

SA-A: They don't know that. But what they have done, they have taken the copy of those blueprints and sent them down to Pinehurst where Donald Ross, he's the main architect, got a big museum down there, and they didn't have a copy. Nobody had a copy of the blueprints of the golf course but me. But I didn't want to die and just leave them for my children to throw away and be in a box or something like that. I'd rather for it to be in the golf course. At some point in time, somebody--they have framed them. They've got them out there, but they don't want to put his picture there.

PF: That's what made me wonder, when you said it wasn't out there yet.

SA-A: Yeah. You got some old prejudice people out there, they don't want to give recognition to a Black man doing something back during that time, the way that he did. And they playing on it.

PF: Yes. Well, and they're playing up-- I don't know.

SA-A: But that's what I like about the--one of these days, if you're not busy, I would like to just take you out to the theater and let you see what I put together out there. I would like you to see that. Just to see.

Because when this--when our theater more or less, you know, was bought by another company, it's called Cinemark now. It isn't just owned by a man that owned about three or four theaters around North Carolina, places like that. But when they bought it, I explained it to him, more or less the history that I--it was on the frame, like what you got right there [pointing]. And he said, "Just talk to the people when they come out here and do the remodeling and stuff". So anyway, what he did, I found out that he, the way that you got that right there, that screen, it comes out a little bit more and it's got three lights over the top of it. And he had that specially put there for me.

PF: Oh, Gosh, that was nice.

SA-A: Yeah. Because he saw them [?] and he allowed the people that were coming there working and getting everything organized, he allowed them to go to the Biltmore House. Because that's the top place that you want to go when you come here, you know. So after seeing all that, and stuff like that, and like I said, they said, "Sam, this is yours".

PF: Now does it have his picture?

SA-A: Yeah. All these pictures and all this stuff.

PF: Good. Good.

SA-A: And the Black men out there working and all kind of stuff.

PF: See, they should have that, in this day and age, at the other. But I know when we came here, almost 40 years ago, they were openly anti-Semitic. They just stated it.

SA-A: Yeah. Yeah. Well, see, this Black man that played professional basketball but lived in Black Mountain--

PF: Daugherty?

SA-A: Daugherty. He was the first and the only Black person that's ever been a member out there.

PF: It had to be a celebrity to do it. Yeah.

SA-A: Well, they had changed that back then, but he had to have the money to do it.

PF: Sure.

SA-A: But he comes out there and plays golf now.

PF: He is a nice man. He used to come to where I worked and just as nice as could be.

SA-A: Well, anyway, he comes to golf out there, and, you know, he owned a house out there but he sold the house but he still belongs to the country club. You don't have to be a

member--to live out there in Biltmore Forest to be a member of the country club. So he comes there.

So one of these days when you're not busy, give me a call. I would like to show you that.

PF: Okay. I will do that.

END OF INTERVIEW.